

Testimony for the Senate Education Committee

Senate Concurrent Resolution 4011

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Chairman Schaible and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Alexis Varvel. I live in Bismarck.

At the risk of making myself unpopular on both sides of the aisle, I am here to rise in opposition to Senate Concurrent Resolution 4011.

Much of this resolution is laudable. I differ because neither the Declaration of Independence nor the United States Constitution expresses unifying ideals. The Declaration of Independence's reference to "*merciless Indian savages*" is hardly unifying in a modern context. The Constitution's three-fifths compromise is hardly unifying in a modern context.

The principles behind the American Revolution were never unifying at all. They are divisive and revolutionary ideals that would inspire Prince Hall to advocate for the abolition of slavery.

The "1776 Project" was a self-conscious response to the so-called "1619 Project" of the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* recycles Samuel Johnson's stale lies concerning the essential nature of the United States of America. When the United States of America broke away from the British Empire, it was not slavery but freedom that American patriots fought and died for.

The heart of the problem is the *New York Times*. It is not merely a matter of that newspaper's historical inaccuracy. It is about an arrogant, scolding hypocrisy that comes from raw power.

From the outset, the *New York Times* was a newspaper that profited from slavery. So, the *New York Times* has no moral standing to pontificate on the subject of slavery. None.

Many institutions have historically profited from slavery. What makes the *New York Times* different is that it is making a general call for reparations while glossing over its own baggage.

The *New York Times* began its existence in September 18, 1851. On its very first day, in page 3, column 3, it advertised *New York Life Insurance Company*, a corporation that had, under the name *Nautilus Life Insurance Company*, sold life insurance to slaveowners for the lives of their slaves. Although it discontinued that despicable practice by 1851, it was how that corporation created its seed capital. Later corporations such as the *Baltimore Life Insurance Company* and the *Virginia Life Insurance Company* continued sale of policies that made it commercially feasible for slave owners to send slaves into coal mines under appalling working conditions.

The second day of its publication on September 19, 1851, contained another advertisement for *New York Life Insurance Company*, this time on page 3, column 4. The *New York Times* also printed a prominent editorial on page 2, column 1, consisting of a full throated defense of contemporary enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. This editorial also denounced free men in Christiana, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania who had successfully defended themselves in the early morning of September 11, 1851, against a gang of slave catchers. These were free men who would later successfully defend themselves against charges of high treason.

The *New York Times* gained commercial popularity among the southern slave owning planter class. (Letter to the Editor "*SOUTH AND SLAVERY*", by "A NATIVE SOUTHERNER" from South Alabama, page 2, columns 1-2, June 6, 1853.) On page 2, column 3 of its March 18, 1853, issue, a prominent article entitled *The South: Conditions and Capacities of the Slave* claimed, "*They are a careless, happy community, as all negroes are; but are ignorant, superstitious, slow to learn, lazy, and lie and steal, as of course.*" With flattery like this, no wonder!

Slavery isn't its only crime. Walter Duranty won the Pulitzer Prize as a reporter for the *New York Times* for his coverage of conditions in Ukraine. He wrote lies. He and the *New York Times* institutionally are responsible for a wholesale coverup of Stalin's mass murder. The *New York Times* has never atoned for this crime against journalism. It probably never will.

The ostentatious "anti-racism" of today's *New York Times* and the ostentatious racism of yesteryear's *New York Times* serve the same purpose – to harshly lecture those it deems to be inferior, dividing and conquering the American electorate with its false consciousness of race.

If you go forward with the present language, please delete the word "unifying" from line 4 on each page. And yet, what would be much much better, and a far more effective refutation, would be to recognize Christiana Day every September 11 to celebrate an act of resistance by free people. When people in Christiana resisted slave catchers on September 11, 1851, they illustrated how the Second Amendment could overcome the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Men, white and black, got charged with high treason. The jury refused to convict them.

September 11, 2021, will be the one hundred seventieth anniversary of that day of resistance. Christiana Day should eventually become an official state holiday. If your goal is to rebuke the *New York Times* and its so-called "1619 Project", there is no better way to teach school children about the importance of liberty than for us all to celebrate that day of resistance.

Thank you.

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